

May 5th, 2019, 3rd Sunday of Easter, Year C

Acts 5:27b-32, 40b-41

Earlier in Acts, the apostles had been called before the Sanhedrin and warned not to preach in the name of Jesus. They defied this warning and later were again thrown into jail, but an angel freed them during the night. The guards found the apostles teaching in the temple and took them before the Sanhedrin again. Today's passage recounts this second appearance before the Sanhedrin.⁷

27When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, Composed of 71 members, this supreme court of the Jews included elders, chief priests and scribes who, once named, were members for life.⁵ At this point the members of the Sanhedrin were afraid of being stoned by the people if they publicly abused the apostles.^{5:26} **the high priest questioned them,**

28"We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us." They are accusing the Apostles of trying to assign the blame for Christ's death to the Sanhedrin. Though degrees of personal and individual guilt are known to God alone, the Second Vatican Council clarified that "Neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion. The Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture."¹

29But Peter and the apostles said in reply, They used the occasion to instruct their adversaries. They are more concerned about their judges' spiritual health than about their own safety.⁴ **"We must obey God rather than men.** Note that they did not disobey because of pride or ignorance or lack of understanding of the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. They knew it was a CHOICE between them and God.⁴ The mandate of Jesus to preach the Gospel overrides the charge of the Sanhedrin to keep silent.² Man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. In all that he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right.⁴

30The God of our ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. shows continuity with Israel's past.)⁶ **raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree.** This is a reference to the crucifixion.²

31God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior This is the first time that this title of the "Exalted One whose function is to save" is applied to Jesus.³ **to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.**

32We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." If we are to obey the Holy Spirit and do what he asks us, we need to cultivate him and listen to what he says.⁴ In the verses that are omitted today, Gamaliel argues that the Sanhedrin should not attempt to stop the apostles. If their movement is of human origin, it will die out, but if it is of God, they would be fighting against God. Somewhat persuaded, they flog the apostles and let them go with another warning.⁷

40The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. First they beat them and then they dismissed them. The reason they objected so strongly was because the Apostles were preaching a message that ran counter to expectations.⁶

41So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer (Not saved from suffering) **dishonor for the sake of the name.** The apostles remembered the blessings in store for those who suffer like Jesus: "Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake;

the reign of God is theirs. Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven.”²

Revelation 5:11-14

*In revelation 4:1, John, on the island of Patmos, sees a door opened onto heaven and hears a voice telling him to go up. The action then moves from the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea to heaven. The sights John the visionary sees in today's reading are heavenly, not earthly.*¹⁵

11I, John, looked and heard John's ecstatic vision continues as he sees the heavenly liturgy on which the earthly liturgy is based.⁷ The idea of the Mass as “heaven on earth” is the explicit teaching of the Catholic faith.¹¹ “In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord.”¹ (CCC 1090) **the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number** The host of angels around the throne act as a kind of guard of honor proclaiming the sublime perfection of Christ the Lamb.¹¹ These millions of angels affirm what the elders had said and in thunderous voices cry out that the Lamb slain is worthy to receive honor and glory and blessing.

12and they cried out in a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb This is Revelation's favored title and image for Jesus Christ. He who is Lord, God, Savior, Messiah, King, Priest, and Prophet, is also Lamb. Jesus is called the Lamb no less than 28 times in 22 chapters of Revelation. According to the CCC, “The lamb is Christ crucified and risen, the one high priest of the true sanctuary, the same one ‘Who offers and is offered, Who gives and is given.’”¹¹ **that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength,** Power, riches, wisdom and strength concern the Lamb's dominion. Honor, glory and blessing express the adoration of the angels.³ **honor and glory and blessing.”** This list of seven attributes all point to the fact that Jesus has everything that belongs to the Godhead.¹² The tearing of the veil in the Temple was very significant because just as Jesus completed the earthly offering of His body, God made sure that the world would know that the veil had been removed from “the Temple.” Now the new Temple is revealed to be Christ's mystical body, the Church, and our worship here is joined to that in heaven. Remember that King David received the plan of the Temple from God Himself and it was modeled after the court of heaven.¹¹

13Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: After the countless heavenly hosts and the elders give glory to the lamb in the two preceding verses, they are joined by every creature on earth and under the earth and in the sea as well. In the Old Testament, those in sheol (the abode of the dead) were understood to be incapable of praising God but here they do, for the victorious Christ has burst the bonds of death.¹⁰ **“To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.”** The whole of creation joins in this canticle of praise of the Lamb (Jesus) and “the one who sits on the throne” (the Father) for they are the same.⁸ It is like a mighty chorus in Handel's “Messiah,” as they cry out, “Here's to You! Blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.”

14The four living creatures The traditional symbols of the four evangelists are the four living creatures mentioned here and in 4:6-7. Irenaeus says, “The lion signifies the royalty of Christ (Mark), the calf his priestly office (Luke), the man his incarnation (Matthew), and the eagle (John) the grace of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴ **answered, “Amen,” and the elders** They are a heavenly divine council representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. In chapter 4 it says that they were seated on thrones surrounding the central throne. These elders were clothed in white garments and

each had a crown of gold on his head. **fell down and worshiped.** Sean Innerst reminds us that **WHEN WE PARTICIPATE IN THE LITURGY WE ARE ENGAGING IN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT WE WILL EVER DO.**⁹

John 21:1-19

*This narrative begins calmly, with a hint of bleakness. Peter's decision to go fishing has a feeling of resignation about it—hinting at the depression he and the disciples must have experienced after the death of Jesus.*⁶

1At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is another name for the Sea of Galilee. The city, Tiberias, was built on the western shore by Herod Antipas sometime after AD 20 and named for the Emperor Tiberius, and subsequently gave its name to the lake.³ **He revealed himself in this way.**

2Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael (probably another name for Bartholomew)²⁰ from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, At least these first five are probably apostles. John, a son of Zebedee, consistently withholds his name from the Gospel narrative.¹⁵ **and two others of his disciples.**

3Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." Note that he is returning to his old occupation but this is obviously before the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. **They said to him, "We also will come with you."** So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Net fishing was done at night. The sea contains talapias, that are affectionately called "St. Peter's fish".¹⁵ "St. Peter's fish" are served in all the local restaurants and kibbutzim.¹⁹

4When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. It is unclear whether his identity was veiled because of the distance, the lingering darkness, or a dullness of spiritual insight.¹⁵

5Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No."

6So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. Consider the similarities between the first miracle of Jesus and this, his last. Both were in Galilee. At Cana there was no wine and here there are no fish. At Cana Jesus told them to fill the waterpots and here he tells them to cast their net into the sea. Both resulted in a full supply.¹⁸

7So the disciple whom Jesus loved This was John, the writer of this gospel. He was the first to recognize Jesus.³ **said to Peter, "It is the Lord."** John is the first to recognize Jesus and Peter is the first to act.¹⁸ **When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea.**

8The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, **dragging the net with the fish.** It is notable that never in the Gospels do the disciples catch a fish without Jesus' help!

9When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire Peter is given a second chance to affirm his love for Christ in front of a charcoal fire after three times denying him in front of a charcoal fire at the home of the high priest.¹⁵ **with fish on it and bread.**

10Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught."

11So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. St. Jerome claims that Greek zoologists had identified 153 different kinds of fish. With this background, the episode anticipates the universality of the Church's mission.⁷ **Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.** The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have often dwelt on the mystical meaning of this episode: the boat is the Church whose unity is symbolized by the net

which is not torn, the sea is the world, Peter in the boat stands for supreme authority of the Church, and the number of fish signifies the number of the elect.¹⁶

¹²Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.” And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. The disciples appear to be overawed by what has taken place in Christ through the resurrection and dare not attempt to penetrate the mystery further.³

¹³Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish.

¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to (a group of) his disciples after being raised from the dead. Individual encounters don’t seem to be counted in this number.¹⁵

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, This was his original name and it reminded him of his denial for he had been living by nature rather than by grace.¹⁸ do you love me more than these?” “These” probably referred to the boats and the fish, etc.¹⁷ Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” Three times Peter reaffirms his love for Jesus as personal restitution for the three times he denied him.⁶ At the beginning of his public life, on the banks of the Jordan, Christ had been pointed out as the “Lamb of God.” Now that he is about to leave them, he applied this title to those who were to believe in him. He who called himself the Good Shepherd now gave to others the power to be shepherds.¹⁸

¹⁶He then said to Simon Peter a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.

¹⁷Jesus said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” This triple affirmation of love preceded the bestowing of authority.¹⁸ The Church has always understood that the primacy was given to Peter directly and immediately.¹⁶ Vatican I declared that in this episode Christ made Peter the visible head and chief pastor over the universal Church.¹⁵ The primacy of Peter is perpetuated in each of his successors: this is something which Christ disposed; it is not based on human legislation or custom.¹⁶ Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. It is interesting to note that Peter was the first among all the Apostles in every apostolic list.¹⁸

¹⁸“Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” This seems to be a reference to Peter’s martyrdom by crucifixion. Tradition holds that it took place on a cross upside down in Rome around AD 67.¹⁵

¹⁹He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) “The Catechism of the Catholic Church,” (2) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles,” (3) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (4) “The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles,” (5) “Dictionary of the Bible” by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (6) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004” by Aelred R. Rossier, (7) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:1998” by Lawrence E. Mick, (8) “Revelation” by Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., (9) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst, (10) “Apocalypse: The Book For Our Times,” by Rev. Albert Joseph Mary Shamon, (11) “The Lamb’s Supper” by Scott Hahn, (12) The Navarre Bible: Revelation” (13) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2007” by James L. Weaver, (14) “Catholic Source Book” Edited by Rev. Peter Klein, (15) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John,” (16) “The Navarre Bible: St John”, (17) “The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI by Raymond E. Brown, (18) “Life of Christ” by Fulton J. Sheen, (19) “The Gospel of St. John” by Stephen K. Ray, and (20) “The Founding of Christendom” by Warren H. Carroll.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller; who compiled these commentaries.

On a light note: “BE YE FISHERS OF MEN-YOU CATCH THEM, HE’LL CLEAN THEM!”